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Regional Oral History Office

Warren R. Howell

TWO SAN FRANCISCO BOOKMEN

An Interview Conducted by
Ruth Teiser

Berkeley
1967

WARREN R. HOWELL



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INTRODUCTION

Warren R. Howell is managing partner of the well-known San Francisco book store called simply John Howell-Books. It was established by the then thirty-eight-year-old bookman John Howell, in 1912. Under his management it became the leading antiquarian book store on the Pacific Coast. Although, as John Howell's son here relates, the economics of the book business did not always make for an easy life, the firm gained a solid reputation among collectors. In 1932 Warren R. Howell (born November 13, 1912) began his career as a bookman in his father's shop.

"I was eager to do any and every thing that I could to promote the activity of the book world," he recalls in this interview. That spirit continues to motivate his career as a hard-working and astute buyer, seller, and publisher of books. John Howell-Books is his major and almost exclusive interest, and many of his activities after business hours are in or closely related to the world of books. His intensity and his enthusiasm are apparent in this interview.

The interview is divided into two parts. The first is concerned mainly with John Howell (18⁷⁴~~57~~-1956), dealing principally with aspects of his life that are not covered in his unpublished memoirs, a copy of

which has been deposited in the Bancroft Library. The second part consists mainly of the recollections of Warren R. Howell concerning his own career, the people he has known, the notable books he has published, the notable contributions he has made to both private and public libraries. The latter include the University of California libraries, the Bancroft Library among them.

Of particular interest are his comments on well-known writers, printers, and book collectors of California and beyond. Of perhaps still greater interest is his illuminating discussion of the hard realities of buying and selling fine and rare books and publishing limited editions.

Because of Mr. Howell's frequent and sometimes unscheduled trips east and abroad on book business, it took several months to schedule the time for the interview. It was finally held in two sessions, on January 12 and 17, 1966, in the late afternoon just after business hours. The place was Mr. Howell's office at the rear of John Howell-Books, where throughout the day he sits at his desk working and occasionally glancing up to look down the length of the book-lined shop. This final typescript differs only slightly from the verbatim tape transcript which Mr. Howell read over; he made a few additions but almost no changes.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons prominent in recent California history. The office is under the direction of Mrs. Willa

Baum, and under the administrative supervision of the Director of the Bancroft Library. This interview with Warren R. Howell comprises one of a series in the field of literature, publishing, and printing that has been undertaken on the advice of Professor James D. Hart, Department of English. Among other interviews in the presently-continuing series are those with Albert Sperisen, Brother Antoninus, Adrian Wilson, Edward deWitt Taylor, Jane Grabhorn, Robert Grabhorn, Lawton Kennedy, and Oscar Lewis.

Ruth Teiser
Interviewer

31 March 1967

Regional Oral History Office
Room 486 The Bancroft Library
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JOHN HOWELL

(First Interview, January 12, 1966)

Background

Teiser: I was very much interested in reading the autobiographical memoirs of your father, John Howell.*

Howell: You can see in them all the people with whom he had worked in one way or another, in all the different fields of activity that were a part of his life. Many of the people were related to the book world, but not all of them.

Teiser: Helen LeConte, who is Professor Joseph LeConte's daughter, told me that her father said of your father, "How could that bad boy have grown into such a respectable man?" Apparently he had a college reputation for pulling tricks.

Howell: My father's middle initial was G, and he was known as Johnny "Good-Boy" Howell.

Teiser: Who called him that?

Howell: I think his contemporaries in high school. He prepared for medicine, as his autobiography shows. It did not please him. This also points up the fact that very few people in the rare book world ever prepare for it. They come in from some other field.

*A copy is on deposit in the Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley.

Teiser: In his autobiography he said, "I had always loved books."
and that was his only explanation for going to Paul
Elder's, even at a cut in salary from his previous position.

Howell: He dropped into Paul Elder's, found it interesting, and
he went right in to it. His activity with the publishing
of the Berkeleyan identified him with the book world. This
was in a sense carrying on his father's publication of a
newspaper in Healdsburg, the Russian River Flag. His father,
my grandfather, in 1868 bought and changed the Democratic
paper into the Republican paper. It had distinction in
northern California. He ran it until 1876.

My grandfather's brother [Saul Sylvester Howell] was a
scholar and a professor at a university in Iowa. He came
out with Warren Olney. Their wives were sisters. I have
the diary that Saul Sylvester Howell kept. He was an
intellectual. The two Howell families and the Olney family
lived in this one house in Healdsburg which is still standing.
My grandfather and his brother Sylvester had intellectual
interests and did publish this paper. They struggled along
with it and sold it at a good price, but then went into the
money brokerage business. I don't know much about that. I
don't know about my grandfather's activities after that.

Teiser: Your father mentioned that he went to college and helped
pay his own way.

Howell: He did work his way through college. My grandmother had a
ranch up in Colfax where my father lived for a year. People



John Howell Family about 1918

John Jr., Mrs. Howell, Warren R., John Howell, Ruskin

Howell: came there for a vacation. One of the most distinguished visitors was David Starr Jordan. There must have been many others--Charlie Keeler. I guess he was Berkeley's poet laureate.

John Howell and Paul Elder's Book Store

Howell: My father's activity with Paul Elder had a lot to do with the Elder publications. He brought in his younger brother, Ray, who was attending the University of California. My father managed Paul Elder's in San Francisco after the fire, while Ray, John Henry Nash, and Paul Elder were trying to keep a publishing activity going with headquarters in the East.

Paul Elder's publications began even before my father was there. It was Morgan Shepard first. Elder and Shepard. Shepard later went on to found John Martin's Magazine. I was brought up on that. I suppose that ran into the 1920's.

I suppose that Paul Elder's was the most important place for the gathering of interesting literary people in San Francisco. They were then publishing books by contemporaries who lived here. They published the Cynic's Calendar, which seemed to be their best seller. There was Ethel Watts Mumford, Oliver Herford, and Addison Mizner; all of them left this area to go East. Also Gelett Burgess, Will Irwin and Wallace Irwin left. These were all people who were active in writing in the early days of Paul Elder's.

Teiser: Was your father well acquainted with them all?

Howell: Oh, yes.

Teiser: Did he keep up his friendship with them after they left here?

Howell: Some of them. Some of them came back. I remember the visit of Gelett Burgess, who came back after the years.

Teiser: What was Gelett Burgess like?

Howell: He was a short, fat man with a pleasant way about him. I can not say much more than that.

Teiser: I did not realize until I read your father's autobiography how close a relationship he had with Charles Field.

Howell: Oh, Charles Kellog Field was a very delightful and lovable man. He was one of the great members of the Bohemian Club. He was the best man at my father's wedding. He and my father tried to put over a humor magazine, after their years at college. My father graduated in 1896 and Charley Field in the first class [at Stanford]. The magazine was called Josh. Charley Field was the editor and my father was the publisher. My father also was carrying on the publishing activity that he began with the Berkeleyan. I have seen numbers of it; I have never seen a complete file of it.

Charley Field was a cousin of Eugene Field and of Roswell Field. He was late to the wedding, and the lights went out during the time the service was scheduled. It was a good thing that Charley Field was late as usual, or the lights would have gone out during the service if he had come on time.

Teiser: Do you remember him?

Howell: I remember Charley Field very well as a man with a very

Howell: decisive way of speaking. When I first came [into the business] in 1932, he had long been in the East carrying on the radio program, "Cheerio," He often made visits to the West though, and he kept up a long correspondence with my father.

Teiser: What did he look like?

Howell: He was a very thin, tall man with a very fine aquiline nose.

Teiser: Was he a particularly convivial man?

Howell: Yes, I think one could say that. He is known as the most typical Bohemian in the Bohemian Club. My father did not become a member of the Bohemian Club until 1922. He could not afford it, but he enjoyed the friendship of all the literary figures of the Club. His first publication was the Bohemian Club Grove Play by Rufus Steele, which was The Fall of Ug*. That was the only publication of a [Bohemian Club] play that was published outside of the Club. Rufus Steele was one of the most beloved members of the Bohemian Club. Later on, I think, he was the editor of the Christian Science Monitor. He was very close to my father in the early days before the war.

Teiser: Was your father a Christian Scientist from the time he was young?

Howell: He was brought into it by his older sister and by his mother about 1900, I think. He did read at the First Church of Christ Scientist during World War I. He knew all the leaders in the movement throughout the country. They always came to see my

*Printed by John Henry Nash in 1913.

Howell: father when in San Francisco. Many were members of the board of directors and publication committee. For many years he was the Berkeley representative for advertising for the Christian Science Monitor.

Teiser: In his years with Paul Elder, did Elder put much emphasis upon rare and old books?

Howell: Yes, they always had rare and old books. They had many departments, more than one can realize. I don't understand what they all were. Old catalogues do exist. Besides old and rare books and sets, and new books, they had paintings and drawings, and art objects. I believe they took on thirty people at Christmas time. My mother worked there. On her way to England she stopped off and worked one Christmas. She met my father, fell in love with him, and the two were married in 1905. I have heard that story many, many times.

Teiser: Did your father spend more time on the publications of Paul Elder's than on the other affairs of the shop until he started traveling for the company?

Howell: He, as I understand it, was general manager from shortly after he started there until 1912. He was working right under Mr. Elder. He was always "Mr. Elder." My father was always "Mr. Howell." My father said one time, and I think he partially meant it, that if Mr. Elder had ever called him "John," he probably would never have left Paul Elder's in 1912. My father quotes in his memoirs that Gertrude Atherton passed them on the street and spoke of the "young Mr. Howell and the correct Mr. Elder."

Teiser: Was Mr. Elder quite a formal man?

Howell: Yes, very formal and aloof.

John Henry Nash

Teiser: Was your father's first association with John Henry Nash at this time?

Howell: Yes, this is when they became associated, when Nash was first with the two Taylors. My father introduced Mr. Nash to two men who became the greatest patrons of the book that we have seen. One was William Andrews Clark, Jr., and one was Charles W. Clark; they were my father's best customers when he started in business for himself. This was particularly true of Charles W. Clark, who lived here. They are well known as being the sons of Senator Clark of Montana.

The catalogue of the Charles W. Clark library, Volume I, carries my father's name as publisher. After that John Henry Nash's name began to appear. That is typical; John Henry Nash took over and ran things. He took everything to himself. Nash knew everything and knew best how to run everything. How their misunderstanding came about--my father gave Harry Nash all of his printing. Since Harry Nash had such fine ideas, we had three grades of stationery. [And] Harry Nash bought books from my father. Harry Nash took over the printing of the Ruth St. Denis Pioneer and Prophet, and Ted Shawn, her husband, who was a very close friend of the Howell family, hadn't very much money. He owed my father a lot of money,

Howell: about \$8,000. The book was to be a \$7.50 book, but with John Henry Nash it became such an expensive book that Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis were years paying off the bill.

Harry Nash could not be told very much about how things should be done. He was used to printing books for people where the cost was unimportant. I have a correspondence somewhere between my father and Harry Nash. My father claimed quite correctly that he was being charged exorbitant prices for the printing of stationery; Henry Nash said that he was being charged high prices for the books which he bought from my father. My father told him that he could return any book he wanted to, so he returned one book.

Teiser: Did your father feel that he was charging too much for the books that he was printing for him, too?

Howell: Yes, he did. He had difficulty with The Stevenson Baby Book. That was in 1922.

Teiser: This sounds like an old story with Nash.

Howell: There is the well known rhyme that has been quoted: "Three loves has John Henry Nash--one without stinting is his love for fine printing; the second is his love for John Henry Nash; the third is for cold cash." That was agreed upon by practically everyone, particularly John Howell, Paul Elder, and Henry H. Taylor. Albert Bender told a story: he said Harry Nash said to him, "Albert, I am worried I might be buried alive." Albert said, "Harry, that is all right. When you are lying out there on that slab, I will come up and whisper into

Howell: your ear, 'Henry Taylor, Paul Elder, and John Howell.' If you don't rise up and scream, I will know you are dead."

After John Henry Nash retired from his teaching and printing up in Oregon, he came back to San Francisco. He had mellowed quite a bit. He called on all his old enemies; came to John Howell's Book Shop. He was very pleasant and very quiet. He spoke about his books. He was trying to put together his early printing for the Tomoye Press, and so forth. He bought what we had. I don't know what happened to them. I think they might have been added to the collection at the University of California that they finally bought. You know about that collection.

Teiser: Yes. I know that most of his printed work is there. Isn't that correct?

Howell: Yes, although the library carries the book plate "Mr. and Mrs. Milton S. Ray," it was really bought by the University. They put up most of the money. John Henry Nash was very pleasant to us, and I enjoyed talking with him. It was a little bit sad to see this man mellowed to such an extent that he was quite meek. The Depression years had hit him so badly that I think he was no longer the man who could do no wrong and cared only about dealing with very, very rich people. He seemed to have a knack in those early days of charging so much that the rich people loved it. People used to remark that you had to have a step-ladder to handle his books, in order to read them.

Teiser: I didn't realize he was interested in the Tomoye Press, later, himself. I thought he just cast it away as a youthful venture.

Howell: He seemed quite proud to pick up the volumes that he printed in those early days, in 1910 and before.

Teiser: Your father must have been involved in some of his Tomoye Press activities.

Howell: He certainly was involved, but I have no recollections of my father's involvement with it--

Teiser: Do you remember Bruce Brough? Does that name mean anything to you?

Howell: Yes, that name means something to me. Yes, I think he did the book for Charles Erskine Scott Wood, didn't he? In Portland. The Maia? A folio volume, done in the early days.

Teiser: He was at one time connected with the Tomoye Press. Were Paul Elder's misunderstandings with him [Nash] of the same kind as your father's?

Howell: I don't know the nature of their misunderstandings.

When I joined my father in 1932, you were either one who followed the fine printing of John Henry Nash or the fine printing of the Grabhorns. John Henry Nash still had a studio then, and he was still doing printing here. There were almost two separate schools in San Francisco at that time. Everybody recognized that the presswork on the printing of John Henry Nash was of the best. Yet, they did not like the oversized, flamboyant printing.

Teiser: And he did not do his own presswork?

Howell: The presswork was done by Lawton Kennedy.

The Grabhorn Press and Howell-North

Teiser: What did your father do then after he fell out with John Henry Nash?

Howell: When the Grabhorns came in 1920 (I had recently the announcement that Ed had brought to my father when he was at 517 Montgomery), they asked him for something to do. My father gave them a manuscript that he had secured from the Mark Robinson library in the [Hawaiian] Islands. It was Robert Louis Stevenson's Diogenes in London, which actually became the first book that the Grabhorns did for a publisher. From then on the Grabhorns did various books for my father. The association was a very warm one between them.

Teiser: Apparently the Grabhorns are very pleasant to work with.

Howell: Yes. They are very undependable as to getting things out on time, but agreeable and congenial people.

Teiser: Have they been more realistic about the financial aspects of their work than Nash?

Howell: I would not say that; I would not say that they are more realistic. They were certainly more realistic in not making exorbitant charges, if that is what you mean. Their financing was a chaotic arrangement.

Teiser: What was your first Howell-North Press book?

Howell: There were various books done during the war. My father did his best to turn over to the Howell-North Press books that people wanted done. The book that really put them in the business and enabled them to buy a \$10,000 press was My Playhouse Was a Concord Coach by Mae Hélène Bacon Boggs. Everything

Howell: is in blue, and there had to be the right accents on H  l  ne. She became very fond of my brother Bob and his partner, Morgan North. But she was also very trying in supervising the production of the book.

Teiser: Was that one of their first books?

Howell: I guess that was their first big book. The other books they printed for my father were the Frank Mortimer book, and they printed the Dr. Cooper Is This the Man?, a poetic tribute to Winston Churchill. Shortly, after the war they acted as the publisher for Renton Hind's Spirits Unbroken. My father had known the Hind family for years. Renton Hind had left the Philippines and come out here. He wanted to publish his experience of internment during World War II in the Philippines. He had a title for his book, which was Three Lost Years. Typical of my father, he explained to Renton that these three years were not lost, and from then on the title was Spirits Unbroken. This goes back to a title change that my father suggested to David Starr Jordan, I remember. The book that Paul Elder published was The Philosophy of Despair. My father suggested that it should be called The Philosophy of Hope. It so happened that either title would apply.

My father did have another Stevenson manuscript which was printed by Kennedy-ten Bosch. That was The Best Thing in Edinburgh. Another book the Grabhorns printed for him was Dickens in Camp. My father bought the manuscript from Ina Coolbrith. He did this at the suggestion of Jennie Crocker, who told him that she had the manuscript of Tennessee's

Howell: Partner. My father then secured those from Miss Coolbrith in the East.

My father had known Miss Coolbrith in the 1890's at the Oakland Public Library. The Oakland Public Library is also well known in San Francisco. Mrs. Frank P. Deering, well known in San Francisco society, was at the Oakland Library at that time. My father said that he always went to see her--I don't know her maiden name but she wrote a book called Hawaii Nei*-- he always went to see her instead of Miss Coolbrith, because she was much more pleasant.

Teiser: Who was Jennie Crocker?

Howell: Jennie Crocker was the sister of Templeton Crocker. She was at that time probably Mrs. Malcolm D. Whitman; she married Malcolm Whitman and later, Robert B. Henderson. She is known to us, though, as Jennie Crocker.

Book Collectors of the Pre-Depression Era

Howell: Templeton Crocker was my father's best customer during his early period of business.

Teiser: Your father mentioned in his autobiography that when he went into business for himself in 1912, a number of people gave him orders to fill when he went to London. Do you know who those people were?

Howell: Yes, I have heard that story over and over. Dr. Harry L. Tevis was one. Charles W. Clark was another. Warren Olney, his uncle by marriage, was another.

*Mabel Clare Craft

Teiser: The father of the present Warren Olney?

Howell: No, the grandfather. I was named after him.

Teiser: Was Templeton Crocker interested in books at that time?

Howell: Templeton began collecting books going back to 1907. I checked over his records because I handled the sale of the great library that he put together--English and French literature and fine bindings. I had occasion to do my best to try to find the provenance of the various books. I looked over all the records to find where they came from. I looked over all the records and bills. My earliest record shows that he was buying books in 1907, which was just after he got out of Yale.

Teiser: You had Crocker's own record books?

Howell: Yes, I had access to them. I have all the notes on them here--all the various dealers with whom he did business. Apparently he was very much interested in California. I heard recently that in 1907 he met William Heath Davis, who had just suffered the loss of his manuscript for the new edition of Sixty Years in California. He showed the whole thing to Templeton Crocker hoping to get some backing, but nothing came out of it. Andrew Rolle told me this just the other day. That shows Templeton's early interest in California history. He started collecting everything he could on California, and bought for the next thirty years. He bought most of the great California books and manuscripts that my father was able to turn up.

Teiser: Had your father known him first when he was with Paul Elder?

Howell: Yes. He knew most of the members of the Crocker family who were interested in books. Mrs. William H. Crocker was one of the best customers in the early days. After the loss of her library, she did not buy too much for herself, but she bought for gifts.

Teiser: Do people really buy rare books for gifts?

Howell: There was a time when every Christmas some of the San Franciscans would come in, sit down, and buy books for all their relatives and their friends. Mrs. Crocker was one; Mrs. J. D. Grant was another. Mrs. Sigmund Stern and Mrs. William P. Roth and others; Dr. Herbert C. Moffitt. This does not seem to happen any more. They may do this now with the new books, but certainly not with the old books.

Teiser: I presume there has been a decline in great private libraries.

Howell: The great private library, along with the library called the "gentleman's library," does not exist anymore. Harry Tevis built up one of the finest gentleman's libraries ever put together in this part of the country. My father heard of it first when a distinguished foreigner commented on it. Remember reading about that in his memoirs?

Teiser: Yes, I do. What happened to the library of Harry Tevis?

Howell: Taylor Curtis, who used to be in the auction business in San Francisco, came to my father and said that he had a chance to bid on the books and furnishings of Dr. Harry L. Tevis of Alma. He asked my father's advice concerning what he should pay for them. My father estimated what to pay for the books, and Taylor Curtis estimated what should be paid for the furniture. I think

Howell: my father's estimate for the books was \$8,000. At any rate, what happened was they got the books and missed the furniture. Had the two bids been lumped together, they would have gotten everything. The bid on the books was much higher than anyone else's bid. My father knew them so well that perhaps he was generous with his estimate. Taylor Curtis arranged to have them put on sale in the street floor office of the Crocker Building. They were sold in the early thirties. Book labels were made and had "H. L. Tevis" on them and were put in all the books. They were disposed of for a period of about two years.

Teiser: Who bought them mainly?

Howell: They were sold to anybody who walked in. Many people started collecting, I suppose, because these books were down near the financial district. I do believe that started R. D. Robbins, Jr. to collect. He formed a fine library which is now owned by his nephew, Irving Robbins, Jr. R. D. Robbins' brother had offices in the Crocker Building.

Teiser: Was that too a general library or did he specialize?

Howell: Well, he did collect English authors--Kipling, Stevenson; then some American authors, art books on California, etc. That was in the early or middle thirties.

This was a very unusual way for a distinguished library to be sold. They were bought by more or less intelligent people but non-book people.

Teiser: Was there any possibility of your father getting them?

Howell: My father did not have money to get the books, unfortunately; these were the Depression days. During the Depression we never had

Howell: any money to buy any library of any size.

Teiser: How did you get on?

Howell: We just barely got on during the Depression years. We took books on consignment and did the best we could. There was never any amount of cash, though, to make a large purchase.

John Howell's Book Travels

Teiser: Was it your father who established the practice that you have continued, of buying books in London?

Howell: My father went to London first and the only time actually in 1912. The war came along and he became so busy here that he never got back. He had a fine visit in London, though. He was introduced by the great bookseller Edmund Brooks of Minneapolis. He mentions in his autobiography that he took him around England and introduced him to all the great book-sellers. They are all identified there. It has always been very strange to me why he could not manage to make that trip to London every so often. He did make trips across the country nearly every year, selling his publications and those of A. M. Robertson. He would schedule a trip across the country by train, of course, stopping at twenty cities or more along the route. He saw more of the country than I have ever seen or ever will. He stopped off in Salt Lake City, Denver, Chicago, Buffalo, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Albany, Boston, New York, and other big cities. This would be a three-month trip. He would find it successful for selling publications and also an opportunity to buy fine, rare books from second-hand book sellers in

Howell: these various cities. This opportunity does not exist any more. The communication is so much better that these books drift to the big cities rather than the people buying them there.

My father had customers in most of these cities. He would call on them for orders and sell them books that he had with him. He always carried a steamer trunk with books. He would sell to his customers in these various cities. And he would often sell books that he had picked up along the way. The great bookseller of first editions was James F. Drake, who was in New York. He was always astonished that my father could buy a rare book in New York and sell it again in New York to them.

Teiser: He must have come to know his customers very well, and their tastes. Were there just a few large, major book buyers whom he would call upon?

Howell: There were major book buyers and people. He would often stay in their homes.

Teiser: Did he call upon libraries too and sell them?

Howell: Oh, yes. He would call on the great libraries of the country. He had a great friendship with the librarians of the great libraries in the country.

Teiser: Did he continue this then through most of his career, this traveling?

Howell: He kept it up until the Depression years cut off all buying and all traveling. But he did this every year from 1912 until 1931.



LOCAL.---NEW YORK CITY.---1,2.
TO PRESENT PRESIDENT WITH BOOK.

PHOTO SHOWS JOHN HOWELL, PUBLISHER,
WITH THE BOOK "SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS IN
CALIFORNIA" WHICH WILL BE PRESENTED
TO PRESIDENT HOOVER NEXT WEEK AT THE
WHITE HOUSE.

6/20/29.

Teiser: How long did it take your business to recover from the Depression?

Howell: Well, the rare book world was in a depression from 1932 until 1946 or 1947. There was little business in rare books during the war. Although the country pulled out of the Depression before the war, the rare book business had not picked up.

Teiser: Did you do well with new books during that war time period?

Howell: Yes, there was a fantastic activity in new books. All those people that poured into San Francisco from all over the country on their way overseas were stocking here for their husbands overseas. It astonished me the amount of business that we did. There were also sales made of new books to be given to a ship or some military activity. My father did not capture many of these opportunities. The business was mostly new books.

John Howell's Bible Collection

Teiser: Your father dealt a great deal in new religious books, didn't he?

Howell: He did have a lot of religious books that were of interest to the Christian Scientists and of interest to the study and history of the Bible. He is well known for developing a great Bible collection. He tells about this in his autobiography, how he formulated this collection of Bibles back in 1918 when he met A. Edward Newton. Newton himself had a good collection of Bibles. My father found the opportunity to get some Bibles in Vancouver, and he worked on them a great deal. He had to restore many of them. They were restored by E. H. Tordoff, a

Howell: craftsman from Leeds, in Berkeley; he did most of the restoration of my father's fine Bibles. It was necessary to split photostat pages, which is not done anymore, to put in missing leaves.

That was my father's great activity, collecting Bibles; and to the neglect of many other interests. He would often trade books with other booksellers to acquire their Bibles. He had been asked to build a collection for a Mr. and Mrs. O. B. Englisch of Beverly Hills. He worked on it for many years. Unfortunately, the Depression wiped them out, so here he was with this big collection.

This did not stop him though. He kept on buying and buying and buying; I did not follow it because I had other things to study. I did help him with the collection in that I carried the books to a series of lectures that he gave in the Bay Area, and even up and down the Pacific Coast. He gave a talk on the Bible and the history of its various versions, and other aspects of it. I absorbed a great deal. But the Bible collection was always the main thing.

If we were ever going to sell that, we would be able to have some cash to buy books. This was always present but did not take place until about 1955. In 1950 the collection was [thought to be] sold. I developed the idea that half the money could be raised by the San Francisco Theological Seminary, but the Korean War came along and changed that. They got out of their commitment to buy the library. Then we worked with the Pacific School of Religion, where the collection is today. But that

Howell: collection was always the thing that hampered the John Howell Book Shop during the Depression years. So much money was tied up in that. I realize now, looking back, that if the collection had been kept until now, it would have been a gold mine. There were great Bibles in that collection that are worth ten times today what they were priced for in those days. But I have carried on with Bibles, and I have done many times the volume of my father's full collection. I even bought one book a few months ago for a price which was equal to the sum total value of his collection.

Teiser: This was in London recently?

Howell: Yes.

Teiser: What was the book?

Howell: That was the Coverdale Bible, the first Bible in English in 1535. My father never had one. My father did manage to keep ends meeting by lecturing on the Bible, as I said earlier. He had quite a bit of income in the early thirties from these Bible lectures. If it had not been for those, he did not think that he would be able to carry on the business.

Teiser: What did the business consist of during the Depression?

Howell: Of course, the whole first-edition market fell almost to nothing. I did not enjoy any of the boom of first editions in the late 1920's; I had only heard about it. There were people buying books, but not first editions.

Californiana

Howell: They were buying Californiana during the Depression.

Teiser: How do you account for that?

Howell: That was local interest. Local interest will always exist, no matter what part of the world, for people who care about their local history. This, I think, may account for the buying of books on California.

Teiser: Were these same collectors like Crocker and Clark still buying during the Depression?

Howell: Templeton Crocker stopped buying in 1926. Dr. George D. Lyman was buying very slowly. He had very limited funds during the 1930's. Thomas W. Norris was buying actively in the 1930's. Thomas W. Streeter was buying actively. I remember being told by Edwin Grabhorn that I could have bought his [own] entire collection[of Californiana] for \$10,000. I did not have the money to buy it though. Ed sold it all to Streeter, and those books will all come on the market in the next three years.

Teiser: That was a very fine collection, was it not?

Howell: He had a most unusual collection of interesting Californiana. Of course, Henry R. Wagner was still buying books in the 1930's.

Teiser: Well, your father continued a very knowledgeable interest in this in spite of his preoccupation with the Bible collection.

Howell: Yes, he did keep up the interest, but his Bible collection was his first interest.

Teiser: When did the Seventy-five Years in California come out?

Howell: That came out in 1929. My father thought about it for ten years, but it took many years to get up enough courage to put out the book.

Teiser: Did he finance that himself?

Howell: He developed very favorable arrangements with Lakeside Press on making payments on the printing. He spent a great deal of time on this book, though, and he realized that the only way he could get back his money and make a profit was to make special editions. He had a mass of California pamphlets and assembled material--newspapers, broadsides--that he would use to illustrate these deluxe copies of which there were about 350. They sold for between \$25 and \$350. My father's idea being, although he never stated it this way, that if a man could afford to buy a \$300 book as well as you or I could afford to buy a \$10 book, then let him pay \$300 for it but give him full value. The whole edition would have sold out quickly but for the Crash in 1929. It was perhaps a few years before the edition went out. Now we are working steadily at another edition.

Teiser: How has the value been on those special, illustrated copies?

Howell: They are all worth a lot more than we sold them for. Many of them had very fine, valuable pamphlets that were bound into them. One of the most interesting things was the sealed paper letterheads of 1831, which were the first printing done in California. My father made this announcement of the discovery of the first printing done in California in 1931. Yet, some of these letterheads had already been bound in special

Howell: copies. The value was probably down to \$15 or \$20. Now they are ten or fifteen times that.

WARREN R. HOWELL

Early Career

Teiser: You came into the business right at the worst possible time, didn't you?

Howell: Yes, I did.

Teiser: How did you happen to decide to?

Howell: Well, I had always been brought up in books naturally; I don't have to go into that. I was always surrounded by them at home and I had worked in the book shop during vacations sticking labels in the books, making deliveries and so forth. I had always planned to be in the book shop. I went to Stanford, class of 1934. My roommate, whom I had coached in grammar school in mathematics and who knew that I had jumped three grades, said that I ought to go into engineering. I changed then, after registering for history and romance languages, to engineering. But in 1932 my father said that he needed me in the book shop, so I came, which turned out to be the best thing for me.

Teiser: Were you pleased to be in the book shop in 1932? That was a pretty dismal year.

Howell: This is a wonderful world and I enjoy it thoroughly. There was very little money to go around, but I found that there was so much to occupy me and so much to learn in all the various aspects of the book world. I wanted so much to develop in it and expand in it, but I was hampered by lack of capital at that time. I know that I could have done a lot of good business if there had been money to put into buying collections. There



John Howell sons about 1928

Warren R., John Jr., Ruskin, Robert

Howell: were many opportunities that we had to pass up. This was true of most of the other book sellers at that time.

Teiser: When you came into the shop then, were you operating with a small group of people here? What was it like in 1932?

Howell: There was a bookkeeper, George Stokes; my father mentioned him. He had been here for about ten years. Then there was Douglas Watson's wife, Mai. And that was it. There was a staff of only three or four.

Teiser: Did you have any special duties to begin with?

Howell: I did everything possible: delivered books, typed letters, dusted books, arranged books, studied books. I was eager to do any and every thing that I could to promote the activity of the book world. Books had to be sold, and I always had a difficult time with my father, who had still the thinking of the 1920's -- what people bought in the 1920's. I would always have to say to my father, "Now look, this book no longer sells for \$50. The market is now \$15." He would always claim that I did not know the book. That was probably true; he knew more about the book than I did, but I did keep up with the current market prices. But he would say, "No, you don't know about the book." So his room would get filled with many books that he thought he knew more about, but they did not sell anyway.

Teiser: How many years were you here before you went into the war?

Howell: From July, 1932 until July, 1942.

Teiser: Oh, then you really had a full grasp of the subject before you went off.

Howell: My first great opportunity to do something that had not been tackled before was building up a library for Edward E. Hills, the president of Hills Brothers Coffee Company. These were books of flowers and birds. It was mostly for Mr. Hills that I went to New York in 1938, which was my first trip East. I was looking for books for him and any other books that I could find. One of the things that I remember most was how everyone in the East--the booksellers and the librarians--spoke with such great affection of my father. It made me quite proud to be associated with my father, to know that these people whom he had seen a lot of ten years before had remembered him so well and so warmly. It was very gratifying to me. I felt that, of course, from those people who did call on our shop here. But to go back East and find the warmth back there about my father was very gratifying.

Teiser: Did he give you quite a free rein in buying by then?

Howell: Well, I did what I could to get books on consignment or on approval. I did cover the East and went to Boston and Washington. I looked around. I remembered Dr. Rosenbach, who told me that whenever I came to New York I must see him and we would spend all day together. I did call on him, looked around, saw his wonderful stock of rare books and found some that were underpriced which I bought, but it was a Jewish holiday and I did not get to spend the day with him as he had promised. Dr. Rosenbach's attitude towards other booksellers has been written up many times. Quite often he did do nice things, or offer to do nice things, for

Howell: younger booksellers.

Teiser: Did you do any selling on that trip too, as your father had done previously?

Howell: I don't think I did at all. I did my best to try to buy books and bring them home. I always felt that one of the best things one could do was to bring rare books to California. I did not carry books with me at all. I do it sometimes, but not to the extent that my father did.

Teiser: After you entered your father's firm, did you gradually take over more and more responsibility?

Howell: I was seeking to take over all the responsibility I possibly could. Working together with my father, we made a very good team. This business is a one-man business, generally speaking. But if you have somebody who can take care of the people who come in, either to sell a book or to buy a book, while somebody else is out at lunch or on a trip, it works out very well. This was a wonderful relationship in the thirties and late forties, when my father retired more or less, up to 1950.

Teiser: I see. Was it then that you came to be managing partner?

Howell: Well, I was manager, so to speak, just before I went into the Navy, July, 1942.

Teiser: And then your father resumed management through the war years?

Howell: Yes. He did.

Teiser: Did you then become part owner after your father's death?

Howell: Before the war years we entered into a partnership, with my mother, my father and myself, the three of us. At my father's death, half of his partnership interest went to my mother,

Howell: and the other half to me. And she is still a partner in the business, but a silent partner.

The Hills Collection

Teiser: Where is the Hills' collection, that you mentioned? Is that still in the possession of the Hill's family?

Howell: Edward E. Hills put together a great library, bought all the magnificent folios of John Gould and D. G. Elliott, and it is now in the California Academy of Sciences. He wanted very much to buy a set of the most famous bird books, Audubon's elephant folio edition, four volumes. I said, "Well, we will try to find one." So I read everything I could. I read the autobiography of Audubon by Herrick. I saw reference there to the set of Audubon that Mark Hopkins had. I realized that probably went to the Mark Hopkins Art Institute. I also knew that Robert Cowan had been there, so I asked him if he had remembered seeing it. I telephoned my father's friend, Spencer Macky, who was the director of the California School of Fine Arts out on Chestnut Street. I said, "I think you might have an Audubon set still." He said, "Oh no. We do not have an Audubon set. Certainly not. Oh, wait a minute. There are some funny old bird pictures in the basement." I put down the phone, and that minute Eddie Hills walked in. I told him quite directly and openly, as I often do, sometimes not to my advantage, but I told him about it. He said, "I'll go right out and take a look." His chauffeur took him out to the school, and down in the basement was the

Howell: four volume Audubon set. They had been lying there all these years and they did not know they had it. Here the school was begging money from the community, and yet they had an asset in the basement. That is the set that the California Academy of Sciences has. I tried to buy it from Mr. Hills later for more than double what he paid for it, but I did not succeed. He said that he bought it for so little that he thought he should give it away. Now I am willing to pay ten times the price that he paid for that set in 1940 or 1941. What is more, I have two people looking for a set right now. Neither one of them is here. One is in Philadelphia and the other is in Texas. They want to buy it from me if I can dig one up. That brings up a problem. If I buy a set, who gets first chance at it? That is always a problem in the rare book business--if you get a particularly rare book that you know that three people want, how do you arrive at the decision of who gets the book? Then how do you keep the knowledge that the book has come and gone from the others who wanted it? This is one of our headaches--how to appease the loser.

Teiser: Was this the first shop in San Francisco that dealt exclusively or mainly in rare and old books?

Howell: I like to think that it is. Certainly it is the only rare book shop that has been in the rare book business for such a long period. There are many secondhand book dealers in San Francisco who did have rare books and who probably did not have any new books at all. I think Fred M. DeWitt is one.

Howell: He had a great stock of Californiana that went up in smoke in 1906. He had just bought the library of Chief I. W. Lees. He had a great library of criminology that went up in smoke. Fred DeWitt said in 1939 (I think) that he would be riding in a Rolls Royce if he had the books today which he lost in 1906.

I learned so much from the great mentors Henry Wagner and Robert Cowan. I spent all the time I could with them. I realized that a good deal of our knowledge in the rare book world comes from picking the brains of those specialists who have spent maybe a lifetime in one particular field. By asking them questions we could get the benefit of their knowledge.

The Evans Collections

Teiser: You yourself have done a great deal with books of science, haven't you?

Howell: I have always been fascinated by the history of science, ever since I happened to know the famous doctor, Dr. Herbert Evans, in the early thirties, and worked with his catalogue that he put together in 1931. I thought about it and wanted to buy the books, but not until the last fifteen years have I handled so many books. I have been extremely active in this field in the last five years. Just today I got Dr. Herbert Evans' library number--11.

Teiser: What was the story of that?

Howell: Dr. Herbert Evans is one of the great collectors in the history

Howell: of science. He put together an exhibition for the University of California in 1934. He is a biologist, a graduate of Johns Hopkins, and a member of the faculty of the University of California. He goes back to 1912. He was the discoverer of vitamin E and has been one of the thirty great scientists in the world at one time. He won every honor in medicine except the Nobel Prize. He was working with the pituitary gland. He has put together these various collections. I have numbered them now up to number 11. They are not all on the history of science. But I have handled five of them.

Teiser: He puts together collections and then disposes of them?

Howell: He buys rare books because he knows them and understands them. He buys until he is so much in debt from buying that now he must sell the library to settle the book debt. This is pretty much the pattern of his collecting. It is what has kept him young, I would say. He is 82 years old now. His mind is still young. He is still pretty flexible. I have sold him very important books over the years. One great book I always think of is Hooke's Micrographia. I sold him that for \$30 in 1935. I sold him another copy twenty-two years ago for nearly \$600, which shows how flexible he is with the rising cost. Not many other people are so flexible.

Teiser: You say his collections have been mainly but not entirely on science?

Howell: His first library, which was on science, is now at the Princeton Institute for Advanced Studies. I bought that and sold it to

Howell: Jake Zeitlin who sold it to Lessing Rosenwald who gave it to the Institute for Advanced Studies at Princeton. His early library on medical classics is in Denver. A third library was on Americana, which was sold to Dawson's Book Shop in Los Angeles in 1945. This was mostly Mid-west Americana. A fourth library on the history of science was bought by Jake Zeitlin. The University of California should have acquired it, but they said there were too many duplications. I have always questioned the idea of duplications that librarians give for not buying a library. They do not take into consideration that maybe the books that are not duplicated are nearly worth the price of the whole collection. Nevertheless, then, library number five is now in the University of Chicago. Library number six [which] I bought, was on Northwest Americana. Library number seven was Western Americana now owned by John Galvin. It is now in Dublin. Another library was sold en bloc by me to a collector in Arizona. Another library on the history of science was sold en bloc to the University of Texas.

I have enjoyed the enthusiasm and the knowledge of Herbert Evans for over thirty years. I have learned so much from him.

Teiser: Was this a creative act, assembling a fine library on one subject?

Howell: This certainly is a creative act. This requires a great deal of knowledge and picking the right books and the right editions. It is not just accumulating books. This is work

Howell: that requires a high level of ability. Dr. Evans' book buyers have been specialists in this field. Not only the books, but the right copy must be gotten in the right condition for each book.

Teiser: Are there other notable collectors in this field whom you have dealt with?

Howell: There are many notable collectors throughout the country whose names I can not give at this point. One of the great books in the history of science is Boyle's The Sceptical Chemist that I tried to buy for a collector in July at the Andrade sale at Sotheby's in July 1965. I was the unhappy underbidder at a record price. That went to a local customer. Just on December 20th another copy came up and I was again the underbidder. That went to another local customer.

Teiser: Do some of your customers go directly to auctions and bid against you, in effect?

Howell: Sometimes it happens but not very often. Most intelligent book collectors know that they are better served if they buy through an agent, that is, through a bookseller that they can trust. This is better than buying at an auction. Some people feel that they want their own excitement of bidding at an auction but this can only lead into trouble. Their own excitement will let them get carried away.

Teiser: We are coming to the end of this tape. Is there anything you would like to add in conclusion?

Howell: I feel that my background in engineering has been of some extra help in my dealing in the history of science. It certainly enabled me to know something about these great scientists who have made such great contributions. We are in a science age. Even the scientists who were trained thirty or forty years ago can not keep up with the developments today. Those that want to be next to it feel that they can get somewhat close to it by collecting the books on the history of science. It is an activity that will always be. We will always have science with us and so I see no end to the activity of collecting books on science.

Teiser: Do you include technology in science?

Howell: Yes, this goes along with it. There is a great overlap between technology and science. This has been the subject of many scholarly papers of recent years.

Teiser: Do you buy science books directly for the science libraries up and down the coast? Or do you sell frequently to them?

Howell: Our pattern of buying, of course, is to buy a good book where you see it if you can afford it. If we have one or more, three or four people in mind, we buy when... of course, it is nicer to buy it if you have a definite commitment for a book.

Our collectors are not confined to this area or the western part of America. Only this last week I have sold some very important science books to a collector in London and to one in Zurich, and to one in Texas, and to one in Philadelphia, and to one in New York. The nature of our business is that if you have the desirable book, there are

Warren R. Howell at his desk
at John Howell-Books



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by Ruth Teiser

Howell: people throughout the western world who want it. If you know them, you can go to them to sell it, or they come to you. Besides doing that, we are running an open book shop on the street.

The Book Shop

Teiser: I notice your old letter-head carried the words, "the open book shop."

Howell: Yes, I am glad we dropped that. My father liked the open book shop, but I don't think this is a proper way to term a book shop these days. My father had the decision to make when he began his business. He had to decide whether to concentrate on rare books and travel six months out of the year or to run a book shop and to have a general stock of books and literature. He did the latter.

Teiser: He did a little of both too.

Howell: Yes.

Teiser: Your mother mentioned in her introduction to Catalogue 33 the design of this present shop as having been inspired by Bernard Maybeck.

Howell: My family is very close to Bernard Maybeck; they lived in one of his houses in Berkeley, I think on Fulton Street. They talked to him about the shop and he gave the idea of the shop; that is, there should be a gentleman's library set down on the street. Will C. Hays designed the bookshop in 1923. We have been all very pleased with the wonderful arrangement that was created at that time.

Teiser: Has it continued to furnish enough space for you?

Howell: Well, there is never enough space. We always wished that everything was on one level so that we would not have to be carrying things up and down stairs. This is much better organized, though, than many book shops which exist throughout the world. Most people say, "This is the only book shop that reminds me of an English book shop." In these days of high rents you will not find many rare book stores which handle their rare books on a first floor level.

Teiser: In England too they are rare, are they?

Howell: Well, there are many book stores on a first floor, but not too many. Most of them go up several stories.

Warren R. Howell as Publisher

(Second Interview) January 17, 1966

Teiser: When you came into the business, did you take over guidance of the publishing?

Howell: Oh, I didn't take over any publishing until 1956, I think. My first book was Filings From An Old Saw; it was part of a series on naval conquests of California that I got into with my old friend Colonel Fred Rogers. We brought out four books. They are all listed in my Catalogue Number 37. What intrigued me, of course, having spent four years in the Navy, was the naval conquest of California, and the books that Colonel Rogers brought to my attention. They are not large editions; they are 600 or 750. This was fun, and didn't get in the way of selling rare books.

Teiser: I think you mentioned, in connection with the publications of your father, that he made an advantageous arrangement with the printer. In general, when someone like you, a bookseller, publishes, how is it done?

Howell: Well, it all depends how much money there is around. You don't get your money back all at once. It sometimes takes a year or so before you even get your cost back. My four publications I paid for when the bill was presented. The book I did for Mrs. Celia Tobin Clark, the Agnes Tobin book, was paid for by her, and Malaspina in California, John Galvin lent me the money to finance the book. The other books I have done for John Galvin, he has done all the financing of the books.

Teiser: So it's very flexible.

Howell: Yes, there's no set pattern, of course. The books I've published for Barbara Holman, she arranged payments over a period of two years, which would more or less coincide with receipts from the book sale, so we weren't putting out a lot of money before we got it back.

Teiser: Do the printers ever involve themselves in the financing of the publishing?

Howell: Oh, they often do, and my good friend Lawton Kennedy often said he would go along with me on any publication. Right now we're involved with reprinting The Californian, which was a project of Charles R. Wood. He wanted to show what fine offset work he could make, and he said he wanted something to do. This was my suggestion; we've been working on it now for about five years.

Teiser: Yes, it's a wonderful project.

Howell: The cost of this will be shared by Charles R. Wood and Lawton Kennedy.

Teiser: When a printer says that he is sharing a cost, does he simply mean that he----

Howell: He's sharing manufacturing cost.

Teiser: I see. On the whole, is there a profit in publication programs such as you have undertaken?

Howell: No, but we always feel that it adds prestige to our name to be identified with worthwhile books. I think it must be so, because when I was made a Fellow of the California Historical Society, they based some of their reasons for this award on my fine publications. After all, the publications can reach hundreds of people, and a lot of the other work we do in our business only reaches a handful. Only a handful of people really know what we do in the book world. Too much of it is not publicized, because the buyers of rare books generally do not seek any publicity.

Teiser: Very often, your buyers wish to remain anonymous, don't they?

Howell: Yes.

Teiser: When you publish for a private individual, such as Mrs. Clark, do you have any particular criteria? If I brought you a volume of my doggerel, say, and promised that I would pay any losses, would you publish it no matter how bad it was?

Howell: No. We have avoided vanity publishing in every case. Mrs. Tobin Clark had a real contribution in the work of her sister, Agnes Tobin, which we felt should be brought together. Her

Howell: writing was well remembered by her friends and other people of the West.

Many books we've turned down. It's very hard to convince people that we're not general publishers. They think as long as you are a publisher, you will publish anything.

Teiser: Have the Grabhorns printed for you since 1956?

Howell: They did the book of Agnes Tobin. That is the only book.

Teiser: Lawton Kennedy has printed most?

Howell: Lawton Kennedy did almost all the other books, except he designed the Filings from an Old Saw. That was printed by my brother at the Howell-North Press. I found that I wanted to give my brother something to do. But I wanted to be sure that he had fine typographic design, so I turned to Lawton to supply that. Then I found, for later books, that it was much easier for Lawton to do everything as long as my brother did not feel hurt.

Teiser: Mrs. Holman did one, or two?

Howell: Bill Holman came to me one day when John Galvin was here, and he told Mr. Galvin what he was doing. He is, of course, the head of the San Francisco Public Library. He told him that it was his interest to print a book. Mr. Galvin asked me what he had, knowing full well that I knew every book that he had that would be worthy of printing. I mentioned the little guide of which there is only one perfect copy known: The Platt and Slater Traveler's Guide. So this was turned over then for [Mr. and Mrs. Holman] to do. I financed this book, with all Mr. Galvin's approval. It was a successful book that

Howell: has long been out of print.

We also did The Letters of a Young Miner. That was the result of Holman's finding, at an auction sale of Charles Hamilton, these letters for sale which were brought by Mr. Beinecke for Yale. Yale graciously lent them to us for our publishing program.

Since then Bill Holman and his wife have printed the library publications, but we have acted as the distributors and are doing so now. We will distribute his printing of the bibliography of William Saroyan by Kherdian. These books, though, do not carry our name. This is really a very generous thing for us to do. We make \$1.50 on every \$45.00 book that we bill to a library, wrap, and send out. The dealer who buys it from us makes \$4.50; that is a 10% commission.

Lawton Kennedy, Printer

Teiser: We are interested, in this series, in fine printers, as you know. We would like to have your recollections of Lawton Kennedy--how you first met him, etc.

Howell: Well, it seems to me that I have always known Lawton Kennedy. I met him when I first came into the book business. I would always see him at Roxburghe Club gatherings which, of course, is made up of many printers. Lawton has a wonderful way with him and is so agreeable and willing to do anything for his friends. He made it very easy for me and my publishing of books, in that he would always come up to see me. He would bring the proofs up. This enabled me to carry on my business

Howell: and not be out half the time checking things over with the printer.

The book that Colonel Rogers supervised, the Colonel did a lot of the leg work himself. He would go down to see Lawton, but in these other books Lawton has always come to see me. I can say this has been a nice arrangement for me. Lawton has gone along with everything that I wanted to do. He does so in a most agreeable manner. It is awfully hard to get a bill out of him. I am always anxious to pay for the jobs, but the bills seem to be a long time in coming.

Teiser: Does he make estimates in advance?

Howell: He does make estimates in advance, but with me it has never been a formal manner. It is always on hand-written memorandums.

Teiser: Does he participate in your publishing program in any other way than with his printing and designing? I know his knowledge of publishing is considerable.

Howell: He has always had a good idea on the merit of the work published. This is quite true. He has always had lots of imagination on what he could bring to it with the material for illustration or decorations.

Teiser: Does he discuss the number of copies with you?

Howell: Yes, the number of copies we always discuss. We have many discussions of how many copies of the books to print for Mr. Galvin. Currently, he wants 3,000 copies of our next book because the latest book, the Garces, went out of print with 1,250 copies.

John Galvin, Patron

Howell: Mr. Galvin says that he wants to turn out good basic books at prices that will sell the books.

Teiser: Mr. Galvin is a most interesting figure, isn't he?

Howell: Mr. Galvin is one of the people in this world where the adjective "patron" would be a correct one to use. He has been a great collector of books. He is a former newspaperman. He likes to edit books and he takes great pleasure in producing these books. He is willing to subsidize them to the extent that they sell at low prices. I think here one might draw a comparison. William Andrews Clark, Jr., was labelled the greatest patron of the book in the West. The great catalogues Nash did both for William Andrews Clark and Charles W. Clark, and the expensive Christmas books for the former, one of which cost \$56,000--I don't know which one it was. There were ten of them. Editions of 200 or 300 copies. John Galvin's subsidy for printing or publishing books of basic interest would, I think, make him a great patron of the books in the West. He is a better patron in that his books, all of them beautifully printed, will reach hundreds and hundreds of people. Whereas the [Clark] books done by Nash reached a very limited audience.

Teiser: Has there ever been any collector who wished to share his books or his manuscripts with everyone in this way?

Howell: Oh, all collectors have been involved in the publishing of certain of their rarities that they own, or some of the manuscripts. None have done it in such a big scale as John Galvin

Howell: is doing and plans to do.

Teiser: Does he maintain a very detailed interest in each book?

Howell: Yes, actually it is a long distance to watch it from Dublin to California, but he is constantly in touch with me and with Harold Small, formerly with U. C. Press, and with Woodrow Borah, who are people that I secured to supervise the publication. I see him [Galvin] when I make my trips to Europe.

Teiser: Is that when the arrangements for most of the books are done?

Howell: The arrangements are all done by letter, all written in long-hand by John Galvin! Just yesterday we spent a half hour trying to decipher one of his words. In a letter just received he says:

"I do not think we should print any more limited editions-- too precious for me. I am interested in turning out basic books to be sold at popular prices. Let the price do the job."

Teiser: You and he and Lawton seem to make a fine team.

Howell: It seems to be working out very well. There are many books in sight. I don't know how we will survive the activity of selling 3,000 copies of a book. This makes too many inroads into the time for our other activities.

Catalogues

Teiser: I would like to ask you about your catalogues; they seem to me to have been very distinguished.

Howell: Well, Lawton Kennedy has done many of our catalogues.

Howell: We have been awfully busy to do all the catalogues that we should do. We have been fortunate certainly in the catalogues that we have done. We did a catalogue on the Northwest Coast that was made up largely of the collection of Dr. Herbert McLean Evans. Then we had the assistance of a collector and amateur scholar, Webster Jones, who gave us many scholarly critical comments on the books. This catalogue is saved by many people. Our big catalogue was Catalogue 33, which we issued in an edition of 1,500 copies. That cost us \$10,000. It contained valuable books in many fields, with more or less one book to a page, and an illustration of the book. It was beautifully done by Lawton Kennedy. It can be said with accuracy that it is the finest catalogue of fine and expensive books produced, and with fine typographical designs, by an American rare book dealer, printed in America. There are many other fine catalogues that have been issued by rare book dealers in the East, but all of them have printed abroad, nearly all of them.

Teiser: In this one Charles R. Wood did the lithographic work for the illustrations, didn't he?

Howell: Yes. One critic whose name I have in my files congratulated me at great length for showing that we appreciated the wares that we are selling. Too often booksellers will catalogue beautiful books without any feeling for the typography of their catalogue. This was the first time he had seen a catalogue where it showed that we were aware of the fine books that we sold.

Teiser: Do those catalogues come up eventually for sale?

Howell: They will. Someone said he paid \$10 for one. I was very enchanted with the introduction that my mother wrote to it. One of my great customers (a man, so great a buyer that I bought \$100,000 worth of books for him at an auction at Sotheby's Silver Sale last November) said the reason he came to me was because of the introduction of that catalogue. We don't know just why we appeal to collectors sometimes. They don't always tell us.

One of our other catalogues that we are very proud of is Catalogue 34, on English literature. We had the good bibliographical assistance of Ted Hofmann, who was studying for his doctorate in English at the University of California. Two or three very critical English dealers thought that it was one of the best catalogues that they had ever seen--that we were so accurate in everything that we said about the books.

Teiser: How many catalogues have you published? I gather the numeral system started with your father's catalogues.

Howell: Well, we have about 38 catalogues. That does not count lists that have been put out.

Teiser: How many of those have you yourself done?

Howell: About 20 of them. I did all the catalogues that we put out during the 1930's too.

Teiser: Who printed them then?

Howell: Calmar Press did one. Bill Partmann at Cloister Press did one. Howell-North did two.

Teiser: Has Lawton Kennedy done all those in recent years?

Howell: Lawton did most of the better ones. Two or three have been done by Howell-North, offset catalogues. Lawton Kennedy supervised the typography of these catalogues printed by my brother.

Notable University of California Collections

Teiser: You mentioned a number of the great libraries that you had handled--Crocker's, Dr. Evans', etc. Have you handled any others that you can tell about?

Howell: Well, I was very excited about the library of music of 5,000 pieces that belonged to and was built up by Sigmund Romberg. That [collection] was held in storage in Los Angeles, but I knew someone who knew Mrs. Romberg very well, and I was able to place that in the University of California with the help of Mr. Duckles of the music library. This library was bought by the Regents. They pledged \$25,000 to buy it, but did not have any money for the sales tax. I showed the Regents how they could escape this sales tax by having Mrs. Romberg call this an "occasional sale," and I was the agent. They saved \$750 sales tax, which they did not have to spend anyway.

Another library that I handled was the library of fishing and sporting books built up by Don Horter. President Sproul bought them mainly because he said that he wanted to do something for the head of the Ichthyology Department. It was a library that seemed to be a little bit out of place for the University of California in that there were so many books on

Howell: sporting, but I think they found enough to make it worthwhile.

Teiser: How large a library was that?

Howell: About 2,000 volumes

I remember very well when Harris de Haven Connick asked me to come and see his library on music. I was so keen that this should go to Stanford, where George Keating money would add it to the things that he was buying, that Nathan Van Patten was buying for Stanford. I blinded myself to the fact that Berkeley would want it. However, Harry Connick called up the University to ask a librarian to help catalogue it. They bought it directly, and I was not a party to it. I did not mind losing the commission, but I did mind not having sense enough to let Berkeley have a chance at it.

Of course, one of the greatest libraries that I have ever handled was the collection of pictorial material that was built up by Robert B. Honeyman, Jr. That was acquired by the University of California three years ago. That is the greatest single sale I have ever made; and it was the greatest art purchase ever made in the West. I was in the fortunate position of letting the University of California know that if they did not buy it, Yale University would buy it, or Paul Mellon, or several other people. So the University of California had to find the money to keep it in California.

Teiser: How did the handling of the Honeyman Collection happen to come to you?

Howell: I helped build up the collection. It was in southern California;

Howell: Mr. Honeymann felt that it ought to stay down there. He thought that UCLA should have it. I felt myself that it would be very appropriate for them to have it. I realized that with the librarian down there and a new chancellor, they had plenty of steam to raise the money to acquire it.

My dear friend George Hammond, though, said that he wanted it and that they [the Bancroft Library] would have the steam. I said that I did not know that they could generate that much steam, but I must say that the generosity of Susanna Dakin in offering to give \$50,000 towards the purchase impelled the University into action. It is wonderful to have friends who believe in you and know what you are doing, friends who are willing to help with money and get other people to do it. Without Susanna's help and the help of the money from her friends, the University of California could not have acquired the collection. Susanna Dakin has helped many times with me and with other people. I sold the University a collection of manuscripts that my colleague Jake Zeitlin and I got in Mexico. Susanna gave a good part of the money toward the collection, and the University the other part.

Teiser: She has been a remarkable benefactor in her various ways.

Howell: She has done a lot of wonderful things and she thinks well of me and my colleague Jake Zeitlin, and anything we are involved in she wants to know about. I must say here that I remember when the University of California said they would like to have the Templeton Crocker Miltons, the first editions of Paradise Lost and the poems. I said that I would get them given to

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SPECIAL EXHIBIT

IN HONOR of the Library's many friends whose generosity made possible the purchase of the famed Howell-Zeitlin Collection.

NOVEMBER 14, 1959 . . . 1 to 5 o'clock

Selections from the collection will be on display at the Bancroft Library, including the newly discovered journals of Rivera y Moncada, 1774-75; two letters by Father Kino, 1698 and 1703; and the diary of Father Link, 1766. There will also be an exhibit of California literary manuscripts.



Herbert Evans, Warren Howell, Jake Zeitlin, George Hammond

Howell: them, knowing that Susanna Dakin would give them to them.

I got a call back from the librarian who wanted to know who I had in mind to give the books before they said whether they would want them or not. I said, "Don't be silly. I am not going to embarrass the University. If you don't want them, say so." It turned out that they did find part of the money, and they did acquire them. I was very pleased that they also had enough money at the right time to buy Templeton Crocker's collection of Rudyard Kipling, which was very fine.

Teiser: You have succeeded in getting to the University and the Bancroft Library extremely notable collections and individual volumes, have you not?

Howell: Yes, I have been very close to the Bancroft Library.

Friends of the Bancroft Library
and Other Organizations

Howell: I helped found the Friends of the Bancroft Library.

Teiser: Could you tell a little about that?

Howell: I remember before the war that I felt the Bancroft Library should have their group of friends. I discussed it with Dr. Priestly. I made up a list of those people that I knew would join the Friends right off, and each one of them would give so much a year. The answer I got back from Dr. Priestly was that President Sproul said, "Those are the people that we want to get money from for general funds. We don't want to do it."

So it was not until Henry R. Wagner called a meeting together at the Bohemian Club in 1946 with Charley Camp and George Harding, Francis Farquhar, and myself, that the Friends

Howell: got off to a good start. I was first secretary of the Friends. First George Harding felt that, since I was a book dealer, I should not be connected with it. His idea was that I could not travel a two-way street; I could not travel both sides of the street. George Hammond knew that I could, and later he put me back on the executive committee of the Friends of the Bancroft Library. Because of my professional experience, I helped them many times in the acquisition of books, and I always handled the problem objectively. There was never a question of my having an ax to grind. George Hammond knew this.

Teiser: You have also been very helpful to the California Historical Society in their collections, have you not?

Howell: Yes, I have helped them as much as I can. I have given them many things. I was a director of the California Historical Society since 1940 until recent years. I got many gifts given them.

Teiser: The Sir Francis Drake Society--you were a president of that?

Howell: Well, my father published Mr. Wagner's book on Sir Francis Drake. I have been fascinated with it. I was drawn into the Sir Francisco Drake Society by a dear friend, Aubrey Drury. Soon I became the president of it. We used to make the annual trek to Drake's Bay and listen to some words on Sir Francis Drake by a distinguished speaker.

Teiser: The Book Club of California you have also been close to.

Howell: Well, my father was one of the charter members of the Book Club

Howell: of California, and I was pleased when they asked me to join their board. I have helped them in many ways, particularly as the chairman of the keepsake committee two years, and on the membership committee, and then the little job of acting as auctioneer when they had this series of auctions the last three years.

Teiser: Do you feel that the Book Club has been important in keeping alive interest in rare books in this area?

Howell: Oh, the Book Club has been an organization that had a hard time keeping going until the recent years. They just barely hung together during the Depression years. The success of the Book Club has been mostly because they have printed books on California and books by the Grabhorn Press, and the fact that they manufactured rarities. The books were sold very close to all the manufacturing costs. Most of the buyers were well aware of the fact that the books are worth much more than what they paid for them. Many of the buyers buy just for the [value] appreciation, not because they care about the books. The Book Club has found, of course, that they can be sure of selling out of the books on California.

California books sell better than others around this area. But in our rare book activity we have been labelled as dealers and specialists in Californiana. We don't like to have one label put on us; we have done our best to let people know that we are specialists in many fields. We worked hard to play down our specialty on Californiana.

Teiser: By "we" you mean John Howell-Books?

Howell: Yes.

Teiser: You have been active in the Antiquarian Booksellers' Association too, have you not?

Howell: Yes, I was active, of course, in forming the chapter.

Teiser: When was that?

Howell: In 1949. It was a local chapter. I served as the vice-president of the national organization for two years and attended the International Congress in Paris in 1962, as the president could go over as the American representative. I am now currently a director of the national organization. The local chapter has now been involved in cooperating with the southern California chapter in alternating Antiquarian Book Fairs; they alternate from San Francisco to Los Angeles annually. At the first one in Los Angeles, I was the only book seller from the north to participate. It was a chore, but I found it a lot of fun and very successful from a business standpoint. It really takes too much time from the book shop, but I do not like letting down my colleagues. That is one reason why I keep up my participation. This book fair will continue from year to year, and John Howell-Books will always be in it, part of it.

Teiser: Are there other organizations that you felt important in your sphere?

Howell: For a time I was one of the directors of the English Speaking Union. My father was president for seven years and I thought I was carrying on his tradition there, but I found that I could

Howell: not give much time to it so I left that.

Teiser: The Roxburghe Club you attend?

Howell: Yes, I attend the Club fairly regularly; this is always a great enjoyment for me. I am very much involved with the Grolier Club of New York. I became a member of it ten years ago and have enjoyed my association with the fellow members on the various treks to Europe. We went to London and Paris in '59 and we saw books on this trip that you could not see under any other circumstances. It was most rewarding for me and I got to know my fellow members so much better. Then there was a trip to Italy for three weeks in 1961; then there was a trip to Baltimore I attended in 1957, I think. The trip to California in '61, I was in charge of most of the arrangements for that. It was actually for this trip that we prepared our Catalogue 33. It was pretty hard for us to compete with all the wonderful hospitality that was shown to us by the collectors in Europe because of their wonderful homes and estates. Of course, there were no such collectors in this area that could show the same hospitality. But we could show the great city, and two libraries, and a few homes--maybe the homes did not have books, but at any rate they got very great hospitality.

We are now engaged, of course, in arranging for the International League of Antiquarian Booksellers to come to California next year.

Other Notable Collectors

Howell: I certainly had great experience over the years helping George Lyman build up his collection in the 1930's.

Teiser: Was Morgan Gunst a great book buyer?

Howell: Morgan Gunst is one of the distinguished people who lent my father rare books in 1915 for the Exposition. We did not sell him too many books. When I came on the scene, he was more interested in buying modern French bindings.

I will never forget my visit to his library shortly after the war. We had dinner, the two of us, and after dinner we put on white gloves and looked at his bindings and his press books. I thought white gloves might be good for the ordinary person, but I took slight exception. I thought I knew enough about keeping my hands clean and away from fingering the books. I don't think he trusted anyone though.

Teiser: That collection has gone where?

Howell: That collection is at Stanford University. I added to it. I just recently supplied them with the great Manuale Tipografico of Bodoni. They are paying for it over a period of three years.

I have helped a lot with the additions to the Felton collection at Stanford. My father built up a collection for Mrs. Kate Felton Elkins. I have gotten a lot of support from Christian de Guigne, Mrs. Elkins' grandson, who added to it anything that the librarian said he wanted that I had, or that other people had.

Teiser: As I remember, this is a collection of contemporary literature?

Howell: English and American literature of the 19th and 20th centuries. It is a great joy to help people build a collection and to round it out. It is wonderful to see that the succeeding generations care about what their parents or their grandparents did. I have found too often that the children of my father's great customers of the 1920's and before haven't carried on in the same tradition. One exception would be the collecting of Mrs. David Potter, the daughter of Dr. George Lyman. She has become a great collector of San Francisco pictures in her own right.

Teiser: This brings up a point that I meant to ask you. Are pictures and prints an integral part of your business?

Howell: Very much so, they are a very big part of our business. We have built up the great collections of George A. Pope, Roger D. Lapham, Hooper Jackson, and even helped Harry T. Peters and others. I have made a study about it, and I can say without being modest that I know more about California prints than anybody else anywhere. I have handled more than anyone else. One of our great problems in handling these prints is that many of them need restoration. We find that there are hundreds of people who can clean and restore a painting, but hardly anyone can clean and restore a lithograph.

Teiser: Someone can though?

Howell: We had one man doing it, but he died just a month ago, so we are now sending our prints to England.

Literary Friends and Associates

Teiser: May I run down this list of individuals with you now?

There were people I believe your father knew, and I hope you know some of them. Gertrude Atherton?

Howell: She was an old friend of my father's. He had known her since the days of Paul Elder's. She often came in the book shop. We loved to hear her talk. She was very forthright in her manner of speaking. I remember during the general strike in San Francisco, she sat down at the front desk saying, "You should line them all up and shoot them down!" She was, of course, intrigued at the Howell name, as the original Howell was King of Wales. I have the copy of the book Ancestors, which she inscribed to me, "To Warren Howell, Prince of Wales." This I treasure. We had, one time, an exhibit of her books in the window and a photograph of her. She came in and said, "Take it out" and supplied us with a photograph when she was much younger. It was a lovely picture. She was a handsome woman in her youth.

Teiser: George Sterling. Your father was his literary executor?

Howell: Yes. George Sterling I never knew because he died six years before I came into the book business. I knew Mrs. Liliencrantz and other sisters of George Sterling. We have handled a great many materials over the years and built up the collections of the public library and many private collectors.

Teiser: Charles Caldwell Dobie?

Howell: He was a frequent visitor to the shop. I had a few visits with him, nothing extensive.

Teiser: What sort of man was he?

Howell: I can't answer that; the contact was too slight. I do remember so well how pleased I was with the great sales we made of San Francisco: A Pageant in 1933. He and the illustrator Suydam signed all the copies. This was the first real activity as a book seller that I had of making some sales.

Teiser: At that time you had authors sign books in the shop frequently, did you?

Howell: We never had any signing bee.

Teiser: Not a come-meet-the-author session?

Howell: No.

Teiser: Bruce Porter?

Howell: Bruce Porter visited our shop. He was the one who started my father in the study of the Bacon-Shakespeare controversy. I only met him one time.

Teiser: What did he look like?

Howell: He was just a quiet, old man when I saw him. Christopher Morley was an interesting figure that we made friends with when he first came here in the thirties. My father had a long correspondence with him and he would always mention me in his correspondence. He just made one visit to the book shop.

Gertrude Stein, of course, was one of the remarkable people that came into the book shop to see how her old

Howell: schoolmate, John Howell, was. I remember her very well.

In 1935 she came to San Francisco. She sat down in that big chair and looked around the shop and spoke very directly.

Teiser: Dr. Aurelia Henry Reinhart?

Howell: She was an old friend of my father's; the whole Henry family were. I knew her sons. She often came into the shop and she would talk about her special interests in collecting Dante. We supplied her with many volumes.

Teiser: Where is her Dante collection?

Howell: It's at Mills College.

Teiser: Douglas Watson I know you knew.

Howell: Douglas Watson, of course, edited my father's Seventy-Five Years in California and worked on the Bible of the Revolution. He was a very frequent visitor to the shop. He was so knowledgeable about everything about California. People would be fascinated by his conversation. When I was a young boy, I would like to poke myself into the conversation. Here I was, the son of the owner of the shop, and I felt that I had every right to come in and ask questions. I did find out that it was much better if I listened rather than interjecting too much into these conversations.

Teiser: Kathleen and C. G. Norris?

Howell: C. G. Norris often came into the book shop on the way down to the Bohemian Club. He was very breezy in his manner. He often spoke of his writing ability, that he only wrote by hard, hard work and that his wife wrote with great ease. He

Howell: certainly admitted that he hadn't any of the abilities that his brother, Frank Norris, had. My father had known the Norrises for many years. They knew the father and mother. That was Mrs. Benjamin Franklin Norris.

Of course, he had known all the Thompson children* when he was with Paul Elder. Theresa Thompson was his secretary, and Jimmy Thompson was the packing room boy. And I knew the other Thompsons, Fred and Joe Thompson.

Teiser: C. G. Norris had quite a collection of California books, did he not? I remember being in his library one time.

Howell: My father gave a wonderful talk on the Norrises at the time of their wedding anniversary. We went down to the reception in Palo Alto. I never saw the library.

Teiser: Albert Bender you mentioned before. Was he a fairly close associate of your father's?

Howell: Oh, he was a very close associate of anybody in the book world. He was always giving books to many institutions--Mills College, Stanford, University of California, and others. He came into the book shop many times. He had a wonderful spirit.

Teiser: Did he buy much here?

Howell: He did not buy much here when I was here. I always remember when my father was unpacking the books that had arrived from England, Albert came in and said, "John, sell me these books at cost; I am going to give them away." My father tried to point out to him that if he did that, he would be the one making the gift. Albert had a great way of getting other

*Kathleen Norris was born Kathleen Thompson

Howell: people to give books, and this was apparently one of them.

Teiser: Ernest Peixotto?

Howell: I never knew him at all. His widow came in here some years ago and I had a visit with her. I told her how much I admired the mural he did for the wall of Mrs. Roy Anthur in Pittsburg of the Carcasonne. I knew Edward Peixotto, the nephew.

Teiser: Steward Edward White?

Howell: He was an Alpha Alpha Phi fraternity brother of mine. He often would pop in to say hello and inscribe first editions of his book, and to inscribe books to me or to my father. We often had nice visits together.

Teiser: What sort of man was he?

Howell: He always had something interesting to say. I regret that I never was in on his story telling activities, but my friends in the Fuller family particularly used to tell me how wonderful he was at dinner parties telling stories.

Teiser: Joseph Henry Jackson?

Howell: Joe Jackson I knew and saw him commuting on the ferry boat. He often dropped in the shop and had some project that he worked on. We always liked to help him. He was so knowing about books, certainly the best book reviewer there ever was in the West.

One of the most remarkable men that I have known in the book world, of course, is Wilmarth S. Lewis, "Lefty" Lewis who was born in Alameda and put together the great collection on Horace Walpole. In his book Collector's Progress he tells

Howell: how he walked by John Howell's book shop with a friend (this is before he did any collecting) and he said, "Let's go in and see John Howell. He is the man that keeps books in a safe!"

I remember getting "Lefty" Lewis to talk before the Roxburghe Club, and I was embarrassed when he asked me if I had copies of his book on hand. All I had was my own copy with me, in which he promptly wrote, "To Warren Howell, who buys my books but does not sell them." [Laughter]

Well, there are other great figures that we worked with-- Dr. Vollbher was a constant visitor to the shop when he was trying to sell his incunabula collection to the University of California. I never thought he was a real bookman; he was a showman and an operator. I was sad to learn that the money that he got from the sales went into anti-Semitic propaganda. He was the man who sold the Library of Congress the collection of incunabula for \$1,500,00. It contained the finest copy of the Gutenberg Bible on vellum.

Teiser: Was he a San Franciscan?

Howell: No. He was here for a year or so. He is well known in the rare book world and not well thought of.

We always enjoyed the wonderful visits by Lawrence Clark Powell. He could not come in often enough as far as we were concerned. We were devoted to him. He has done a lot to stimulate interest in books.

I missed meeting A. Edward Newton who came here in 1931.

Howell: I was in bed with a broken back. That was a great event for San Francisco. San Francisco entertained him; my father tells about that in his autobiography.

World War II Navy Service

Teiser: Before we conclude, would you describe your Navy experience?

Howell: I entered the Navy in 1942. I went back to Harvard for indoctrination and communication school. I had a difficult time getting into the Navy because I did not have a college degree, and that was a requirement. The Navy demanded it. I thought that they ought to recognize that I had the ability and would make a good officer. It was only with some difficulty that I did get in. I was so determined to show them at the indoctrination school that I could do well that I worked hard and graduated in the top 10% of the class. Out of the 500 students, there were only two that did not have college degrees. I was very much the envy of many of the students because they thought I knew so much about the Navy, but it was only because I cared about it and wanted to do well.

My time at Harvard, of course, were beautiful surroundings for me, a bookman, to be in. Walking by the Houghton Library every day and seeing Bill Jackson and seeing the other great book collectors in that area. One of my father's great friends, Carl Keller, who had 700 editions of Don Quixote, entertained me. After three months of indoctrination and four months of communication school, I was assigned to the

Howell: Carrier Essex where I was communication-watch officer assistant to the ship's secretary. I got back into my world of publications and handled the top secret publications and the issuance and destruction of them when required.

From there I joined the staff of Admiral R. K. Turner, the commander of the Amphibious Forces, U. S. Pacific Fleet, and got out of communications into the job as assistant flag secretary in charge of all secret publications and of top secret mail, as well as the production and distribution of all operating plans. This I knew a little about, but the Navy way was different from anything I had ever known. But we did produce under trying circumstances the most detailed operation plans ever issued by any naval command. We put out more top secret material than any other naval command in history. Admiral Turner felt that everyone, even the smallest units, should have the information, so Operation Plan for Okinawa was a book about 2 1/2 inches thick that I helped edit and produce aboard ship. I had the complete confidence of Admiral Turner doing these things. I found out that rank disappeared and I could tell many who were my seniors what to do.

Admiral Turner told me how one time I should mimeograph on both sides of the paper. I said, "No, I don't think the enlisted men can assemble them. They make mistakes." I was wrong; they could do it. We ended up by mimeographing both sides of the paper. Operations plans that had been six inches thick were only half as thick.

Howell: This was a very technical thing, though, putting together operation plans for the annexes, the appendixes, and the diagrams, maps, charts; all had to be keyed in together. I was the one to do the model plan for the whole Pacific fleet. I told the Admiral that I thought our plans didn't follow the Naval War College style, and he said, "Would you make the correct style for operation plans?" I drew up the model plan we used, and then all the forces under us adopted them by the Admiral's direction. Then we found that the other cruiser and battleship commanders, staffs also, copied my plan. So this all fitted into my world of books. That was a rewarding experience in my life because everything we planned we conducted. We knew that we were helping to move along the progress of the war in everything that we did. We had a hand in it.

Teiser: Your work was recognized then?

Howell: Yes, I received several awards for the things that I had done; the staff under me were also given awards.

Teiser: Was this the first time you had organized the work of many people?

Howell: Yes.

Teiser: Has it helped you in organizing your expanding staff here?

Howell: Yes. I remember trying to convince the Navy that I had officer qualifications. I had to get letters from all the important people I knew, which seemed to be the thing to do. I was very pleased with what Dr. [Herbert Eugene] Bolton said: he felt that my experience in the book world was equal to a Ph. D.

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Howell's Book World -- Recorded for History

By Ruth Teiser

"ONLY A HANDFUL of people know what we do in the book world. Too much of it is not publicized, because the buyers of rare books generally do not seek any publicity."

The speaker is Warren R. Howell, one of the West's leading booksellers. The occasion: a tape-recorded interview by the University of California's Regional Oral History Office. This is one of a series of interviews with notable San Francisco Bay Area people who print, publish and sell books. The work of most of them, like that of Warren Howell, is known to "only a handful of people." That is why they are being interviewed. The activities of the great Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century bookmen are documented in letters, diaries and reminiscences. But in today's busy world, who has time to reflect and write? The field of oral history has been developed to fill this lack.

The busy world of Warren Howell occasionally comes through to San Franciscans when they read a newspaper account of his having bought a tremendously expensive book at an auction in London or New York. Usually the book is of great age, rarity and distinction, comparable to an old master's painting. Rarely, however, does the public learn why Mr. Howell made so dramatic a purchase, or what will happen to the book he has bought.

Two years ago he paid \$44,800 at a London auction for a Coverdale Bible. Printed in 1535, this is the first complete translation of the Bible into English, a book of interest to many people. Only 23 copies are known to exist. Howell delivered this copy to a book collector in Wichita Falls, who sent a chartered plane after both bookseller and book.

The highest price ever to have been paid for a historical manuscript was the \$148,000 which captured for Warren Howell Captain Cook's log of his famous Eighteenth Century voyage to the Pacific. This went to another private collector, who may be expected one day to share it with the world.

INCREASINGLY, private libraries make their way into the public domain. But there are still great individual collectors like John Galvin, the Australian who was active for a time in San Francisco. He now lives in Ireland but continues to maintain his collection of Western Americana and share it in a remarkably generous way. With the aid of San Franciscans Warren Howell (who acts as publisher) and Lawton and Alfred Kennedy (who do the printing) he issues rare and important items from his library. These include the 18th century journal of Father Francisco Garces, recording his travels in Arizona and California, and the recently published "Western America in 1846-1847," illustrated with fascinating watercolors by the surveyor-diarist, Lieutenant J. W. Abert. Underwritten by Mr. Galvin, the books sell at unbelievably low prices, a fraction of their actual cost. Mr. Galvin is, in Warren Howell's opinion, the greatest patron of fine printing the West has ever seen.

Western Americana

Most of the publishing that has been done by the Howell firm since its beginning in 1912 has been in the field of Western Americana. Many of the books have been printed by the fine printers of this area: John Henry Nash, the Grabhorns, and the Kennedys. Just now the Kennedy father-and-son firm has in

the works an edited facsimile edition of this State's first newspaper, *The Californian*.

Before the year is out, the famous book by William Heath Davis, "Seventy-five Years in California," which John Howell published originally in 1929, will be issued in a new edition by his son Warren, printed by the Kennedys. It is one of the most interesting descriptions of the days before the Gold Rush.

While publishing has always been an absorbing part of the business of the firm that is still known as John Howell — Books, the selling of rare books has always been its main source of revenue. Small enough the revenue was when Warren Howell first came into the firm, in the middle of the Depression.

There were some San Franciscans, however, who were buying books. One was Edward E. Hills, president of Hills Brothers Coffee Company. He gave the young bookman what Howell recently recalled as "my first great opportunity to do something that had not been tackled before." It was to help choose and then find volumes for the Hills' collection of books on flowers and birds. The story of how he found for Mr. Hills the famed Audubon "elephant folio" tells something of the kind of detective work in which bookmen are occasionally involved.

Elephant Folio

The elephant folio is the classic four-volume set of Audubon bird prints, a highly prized and rare item which Mr. Hills wanted but none was for sale.

To find one, reported Howell, "I read everything I could. I read the biography of Audubon by Herrick. I saw reference there to the set of Audubon that Mark Hopkins

had. I realized that probably went to the Mark Hopkins Art Institute . . . I telephoned my father's friend, Spencer Macky, who was director of the California School of Fine Arts (successor to the Mark Hopkins Art Institute). I said, 'I think you might have an Audubon set still.' He said, 'Oh, no. We do not have an Audubon set. Certainly not. Oh, wait a minute. There are some funny old bird pictures in the basement.' "

So Mr. Hills got his elephant folio. That prize, together with almost all the rest of his carefully assembled collection, he later presented to the California Academy of Sciences, where it is today.

Pictures as such come within Warren Howell's scope. He was instrumental in locating many items for Robert B. Honeyman, Jr., who for a period of 35 years collected paintings, drawings, prints and photographs of Western America. When they were to be sold, Howell found himself in the unusual position of representing both seller and buyer.

"That is the greatest single sale I ever made," he recalled, "and it was the greatest art purchase ever made by an institution in the West."

Financed partly by the late Susanna Bryant Dakin and her friends and partly by the University of California, the sale put the entire collection in the Bancroft Library in Berkeley. There it is available to students and scholars, and from there it makes its way out to the public. Already pictures from the Honeyman collection have been used in school books, documentary films, and a variety of popular works on Western history. The latest is the widely distributed Time-Life volume, "The Pacific States."



Private Eyes In Her Life

By CAROLINE DREWES

She is small and blonde and elegant, with eyes the color of pale green jade. Her accent is cosmopolitan. She might be Hungarian or Viennese. Actually, she is a native of Amsterdam.

She spent last weekend at the Astor of the paper. She spent last weekend at the Astor of the paper. She spent last weekend at the Astor of the paper.



AT HOME, THE WIFE OF RARE BOOK WORLD'S WARREN HOWELL

Bouquet of flowers echoes the old French water color on the wall

—Examiner photo by Eddie Murphy

The Americans in London all went off to stay in the English. The Americans in London all went off to stay in the English. The Americans in London all went off to stay in the English.

knit jersey A-line dress. Always exquisitely groomed, her philosophy of fashion after nine years in

a coffee table which once was the top of a Chinese desk (The two drawer sections have become end tables). . . . "I do not believe in only one period. And I do not like 'decorated' places. So I do it all myself, bit by bit." She started with Warren's books and old prints.

Incidentally, when they first met, he was one of San Francisco's most eligible long-time single men, and a founder of the Bachelors. He was the first man she met here. They were married, after her divorce from her first husband, on New Year's Eve in 1953. "He says he waited 38 years and I came 7000 miles," Antoinette smiled.

Almost no one wears long white kid gloves along the coast of Turkey any more, honestly, and Mrs. Astor just about passed out. Luckily she had brought along dozens of paper dresses as gifts for the guests aboard, thinking it might be rather fun if they all got dressed up in paper one night and had a party. Anyway, she wound up wearing all the paper things herself from morning till night. I mean, that's all she had, the poor darling. I mean, the poor rich darling.





*When I would know thee...my thought looks
Upon thy well made choice of friends and books;
Then do I love thee, and behold thy ends
In making thy friends books, and thy books friends.*

BEN JONSON

with Greetings of the Season...
John Howell & Son

Christmas card showing the interior of John Howell-Books

Ruth Teiser

Grew up in Portland, Oregon; came to the Bay Area in 1932 and has lived here ever since.

Stanford, B. A., M. A. in English, further graduate work in Western history.

Newspaper and magazine writer in San Francisco since 1943, writing on local history and economic and business life of the Bay Area.

Book reviewer for the San Francisco Chronicle since 1943.

As correspondent for national and western graphic arts magazines for more than a decade, came to know the printing community.

